

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE  
AT KNOXVILLE**

MARTHA EVANS,

*Plaintiff,*

v.

OLD REPUBLIC INS. CO., INC.,

*Defendant.*

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Case No. 3:23-cv-182

Judge Atchley

Magistrate Judge McCook

**ORDER**

Before the Court is the parties' Joint Motion for Approval of Settlement and Dismissal with Prejudice. [Doc. 12]. For reasons that follow, the Court will **APPROVE** the settlement, and this matter will be **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**.

This case involves a claim for federal black lung benefits. [Doc. 12-1]. Plaintiff Martha Evans and her now-deceased husband filed a claim for and were awarded federal black lung benefits on January 29, 2021. [*Id.* at 1]. The Benefits Review Board affirmed the award of benefits, but following that decision, a dispute arose between the parties as to whether Ms. Evans is entitled to 20% additional compensation pursuant to 33 U.S.C. § 914(f). [*Id.*]. The parties entered into the relevant settlement agreement to avoid litigating the dispute. [*Id.* at 2]. The settlement agreement provides that Defendant Old Republic Insurance Company will pay \$15,400.00 to Ms. Evans and \$2,600.00 to her attorney in exchange for Ms. Evans's ceasing to pursue any claims for additional compensation. [*Id.*].

"The Court's approval of settlements is only required in certain circumstances." *Hatfield-Evans v. ENNRL, Inc.*, No. 3:17-cv-419, 2018 WL 6055566, at \*2 (E.D. Tenn. Oct. 30, 2018). Still, the district court has inherent authority to enforce settlement agreements entered into by the

parties in cases pending before it. *Kukla v. Nat'l Distillers Prods. Co.*, 483 F.2d 619, 621 (6th Cir. 1973) (citations omitted). The law and public policy strongly favor settlement of disputes without litigation. *Aro Corp. v. Allied Witan Co.*, 531 F.2d 1368, 1372 (6th Cir. 1976). Through settlement, litigants avoid costly and time-consuming litigation, which burdens both the parties and the courts. *Kukla*, 483 F.3d at 621 (citations omitted).

Considering the strong policy in favor of settlement, the Court will exercise its authority to approve the parties' settlement agreement in this matter. Having reviewed the settlement agreement, the Court finds its terms to be fair and reasonable in light of the dispute. The Court notes that both parties are represented by counsel, and the settlement appears to be the result of an arms-length negotiation whereby the parties managed to reach an agreement. Accordingly, the Parties' settlement agreement is **APPROVED** and this matter is **DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**. The Clerk of Court is **DIRECTED** to close this case.

**SO ORDERED.**

/s/ Charles E. Atchley, Jr.  
**CHARLES E. ATCHLEY, JR.**  
**UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE**